CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINETY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 14 February 2002, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Mohamed Tawfik (Egypt)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): I declare open the 893rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I should like to extend a warm welcome to the new Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, Ambassador Dimiter Tzantchev. We hope to cooperate fully with him in realizing the common objectives of the Conference.

I have the following speakers on my list for today: Ambassador Hubert de la Fortelle of France, Ambassador Seiichiro Noboru of Japan, Ambassador Carlos Miranda of Spain (on behalf of the European Union) and Ambassador Mary Whelan of Ireland.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker on my list, I should like to inform you that my consultations with delegations and groups of delegations indicate a broad measure of support for my proposal concerning the appointment of three special coordinators on procedural issues. Accordingly, it is my intention to convene an informal plenary meeting, once the list of speakers is exhausted, in order to consider a draft decision on the appointment of special coordinators on the following items: the review of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament; expansion of the membership of the Conference; and the approved and effective functioning of the Conference. Subsequently, we will resume the plenary meeting to formalize any agreement reached during the informal meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of France, Ambassador Hubert de la Fortelle.

Mr. de La FORTELLE (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all allow me to congratulate you on the wise and determined way in which you have been conducting our discussions since you assumed the functions of President of the Conference on Disarmament. The task which has been set before you, namely, to put the Conference on the right track, is both difficult and delicate but you may count on the full support of my delegation.

Sir, my statement today is not directly connected to the work of the Conference. I have asked to take the floor in order to inform our colleagues of the main outcome of the meeting on the draft international code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation, which, as you know, was held in Paris on 7 and 8 February 2002.

The idea of a code of conduct arose out of a simple observation. Missile proliferation in the world poses certain risks and it is therefore necessary that we develop an international instrument, with universal scope, which would enable us to control potentially destabilizing developments, by prompting transparency in an area where, to date, no international rule of general scope exists. The draft code of conduct which was discussed in Paris is designed to provide a response to this problem.

This text is presented as a set of general commitments, of a political nature, in such areas as non-proliferation and ballistic restraint; confidence-building and transparency measures relating to missile and space launch vehicle programmes; and principles governing cooperation in the peaceful uses of space.

(Mr. de La Fortelle, France)

On France's initiative, in July 2001 the European Union undertook to encourage the involvement of all States in a discussion on the problem, with a view to creating a universal instrument. The Paris meeting, on 7 and 8 February 2002, was the first tangible step in this direction.

The meeting may be considered a success for several reasons, but first on account of its wide participation. In all, 86 countries took part, including virtually all those States which possess missiles or space launchers.

Second, because of the focused nature of the discussions, all participants adopted a constructive approach, steering clear of polemics on this particularly complex subject. Combating missile proliferation is a very sensitive issue that involves the security interests of States sometimes in situations of regional tension. The participants embarked on a substantive discussion of the draft code of conduct that was before them.

Third, and finally, the meeting was a success because of the quality of its discussions. These enabled us to raise several interesting questions, such as the link between the draft code, on the one hand, and, on the other, the international security architecture and the United Nations in particular; the role of cooperation and assistance and the importance in this connection of the peaceful uses of space; and the relationship between confidence-building measures and the justification of missile programmes in the absence of international norms.

Among these salient features, I would just like to underline two that we consider of fundamental importance at this stage. First and foremost, all participants recognized that missile proliferation was a problem, a threat to international stability and security. Second, it was accepted that the multilateral approach, including the initiative on this code of conduct, offered one possible route towards a solution to the problem.

Mr. President, this convergence of views on these two main points is, I believe, heartening. It encouraged the Spanish presidency of the European Union to express its readiness to host a new meeting. At any event, consultations will continue, so as to assess what follow-up should be given to this initial gathering.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): I thank the Ambassador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Seiichiro Noboru.

Mr. NOBORU (Japan): Mr. President, distinguished delegates, at the outset, allow me to express my appreciation, Mr. President, for your leadership and for your hard work, which have enabled us to undertake the initial stage of the 2002 session of the Conference in such a positive manner. I would like to assure you of the full support of my delegation for you and for successive Presidents throughout this year.

(Mr. Noboru, Japan)

Our special thanks also go to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference, to his deputy, Ambassador Enrique Román-Morey, and to the other capable members of the secretariat for their untiring and invaluable support to the Conference.

Mr. President, now the Conference needs, more than ever, to show to the world its determination for action and its spirit of solidarity. Both are essential if the Conference is to overcome so many difficulties. The Conference must consistently be determined to pursue focused action and universality in the field of disarmament. It is not at all an easy task but crucial to global security. In addition, a spirit of solidarity is a fundamental prerequisite for the Conference to bridge gaps, find common ground and reach agreement on arms control and disarmament instruments. We, all the delegations, are here to do so. Now is a particularly opportune time to focus more on the universal concepts and commonalities among us than on differences. Time counts. After all the serious exchanges of views that have taken place over the past years, including some that were contentious, we must search even more earnestly for agreement to start our substantive work.

The Conference must resume its work immediately because of the compelling realities on the international security landscape. Humanity has already experienced so many wars and acts of terror, and it seems that these sufferings will never end. Random violence, conflicts and military confrontations still undermine stability in too many areas. Major regional conflicts are becoming even more dangerous, because of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles.

As the 11 September incident so clearly showed, terrorism is increasingly a major threat to international peace and security. Terrorist acts are becoming ever large in their extent and terrorist networks now operate on a global scale and employ ever more sophisticated technology for their operations.

In order to cope with these immanent threats to world security, international dialogue and cooperation must be further developed at all levels. In particular, multilateral disarmament measures, which we are here to negotiate, ought to play a special role by enhancing the fundamental security conditions globally and by improving the security environments of individual countries. Multilateral disarmament measures also provide the international community with a predictable, long-lasting security landscape, thereby increasing the prospects for peace and stability.

Currently one of the topics attracting the keenest attention in the area of disarmament and arms control is strategic stability among the nuclear-weapon States. It is evident that their strategic stability has a significant impact on world security. It is also true, however, that regional conflicts and terrorism often have little relevance to that strategic stability. Global peace and security can no longer be maintained solely by a strategic balance among the nuclear-weapon States, but essentially require broader international cooperation.

(Mr. Noboru, Japan)

Some maintain that collective measures by like-minded countries or regional measures are a better means of addressing the variety of new threats than multilateral measures. This might be true in certain aspects, but the fundamental value of multilateral measures should not be too lightly dismissed. I am convinced that different approaches, including multilateral measures, should be mutually supporting and should reinforce one another so as to enhance world security.

In the twenty-first century, technological development and globalization will increase the dangers of the proliferation of weapons, because even the most advanced weapon technologies will become more and more easily available all over the world. To counter such dangers, multilateral disarmament measures will become ever more crucial. For this purpose, the international community should first endeavour to strengthen the existing multilateral measures and then to create the new ones that are necessary.

Let us first consider the existing measures. The Conference on Disarmament and its precursor organizations adopted important international legal instruments, such as NPT, BWC and CWC. These instruments constitute the foundations of current global security. They have yet, however, to become universal and free from concerns of non-compliance. The CTBT is another such significant multilateral accomplishment in disarmament, but it has not yet come into force. These problems must be addressed in order to strengthen the existing measures.

As for the second aspect, namely, the creation of new multilateral measures, that is the role of the Conference on Disarmament. Yet the Conference has not produced any new instrument since 1996, when it worked out the CTBT. It has not even achieved any substantive progress over the past three years and this is causing an extraordinary delay in the multilateral process. International security problems are only worsening with the passage of time, as the Conference has not been able to take any initiatives. This critical situation should be brought to the attention of the leaders of the international community, including the presidents or prime ministers of each and every country.

As I mentioned earlier in this statement, strategic stability among the nuclear-weapon States is no longer the sole dominant factor in world security. Accordingly, the Conference should not allow its work to be hampered by the strategic consultations among the nuclear-weapon States. The Conference should not just wait for an opportune time to be provided from outside but should create the necessary momentum on its own to strengthen the multilateral disarmament regime. Respective member States should renew their determination to agree on the programme of work this year. This is for world security and for the benefit of all.

Here I should like to add that the priorities of my own Government in the area of nuclear disarmament are well known, so I will not repeat them today. I will only reiterate the following: our concern is not so much the content of the work that we should do, but the fate of our organization itself.

(Mr. Noboru, Japan)

The proposal of Ambassador Amorim has been the basis for consultations for a year and a half. Japan has supported the proposal ever since it was tabled and today, I would like to reiterate our position and declare that we can endorse it as such. The Amorim proposal is widely accepted in the Conference and, in my analysis, acceptable to more than 90 per cent of the member States.

I believe that such a broad support for this proposal derives from the following advantages: first its comprehensiveness. Once it is agreed, the work of the Conference will cover all the priority issues at the same time.

Second, it is based on a sound and well-balanced assessment of the maturity of different issues. If there is an agreed mandate on a certain issue, the work on this issue should be based on such a mandate.

Third, its constructive ambiguity, which is an essential factor for agreement on any difficult issue under the present circumstances. An appropriate degree of ambiguity will help the Conference to become more relevant to the real security situation by resolving ideological conflicts.

I am convinced that the Amorim proposal will never undercut the essential national security interests of any country but will serve to promote agreement to commence the substantive work of the Conference, leading to the enhancement of global security. For those countries which have yet to accept the proposal, it seems to me that the following clarifications could foster a better understanding of this proposal.

First, the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as is clearly mentioned not only in the presidential statement contained in the Amorim proposal but also in the annual consensus resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the Conference. More specifically, in whatever language the programme of work is couched or, to be more precise, whether the words "negotiate" or "deal with" are used in the respective mandates, the initial phase of any substantive work to be conducted in accordance with those mandates will be the same, with the common understanding that the Conference is a negotiating forum. At what pace such work can proceed and whether such work will ultimately lead to actual negotiations will depend on the will of the member States.

Second, in order to reach the goal of the negotiations, the Conference needs to overcome the many differences in the positions of various countries. The final decision can only be made by consensus. The programme of work does not therefore prejudge the conclusion of the work in one way or another. In other words, every issue is open until all negotiations are concluded, and every country has the right to say "no" to the final product at the end of the day. Then, why say "no" on the threshold of starting work, thus blocking constructive exercises?

I would like to repeat that it is now an urgent necessity for the multilateral disarmament regime to be further strengthened and the time is ripe for the Conference to commence its substantive work. Time counts. If the Conference fails to start its work at an early date this

(Mr. Noboru, Japan)

year, it will have serious negative implications for international security. At that point, a voice might be raised calling for a substantial reduction of the budget of the Conference or even the setting up of another disarmament negotiating forum as an alternative. A Conference which does not work will be vulnerable to such calls and have no other choice but to consider drastically reforming itself so that it could function better. Otherwise, its very existence would be in jeopardy. Therefore, Mr. President and all my fellow Ambassadors and colleagues, it is my sincere and heartfelt appeal to all of you that we should set aside any small differences for the sake of international solidarity and begin our work here and now.

Mr. President, before concluding my statement, which has focused upon the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to remind you that there are other important subjects which are not dealt with here. Above all, I am pleased to announce that my delegation has requested the secretariat to circulate, as an official document of the Conference, the Chair's summary of the Tokyo follow-up meeting of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was successfully held from 23 to 25 January.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): I thank you for that statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Carlos Miranda of Spain, who shall be speaking on behalf of the European Union. As it is the first time that he will be addressing the Conference, I should like to take this opportunity once more to welcome Ambassador Carlos Miranda. We look forward to fruitful cooperation with him.

Mr. MIRANDA (Spain) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, before taking the floor today on behalf of the European Union, I would like to say this is not the first time that I have had the honour of addressing the Conference on Disarmament. I spoke here before, in 1987, when I was Director General for Security and Disarmament in Madrid. Spain had just joined the European Union at that time but it was not yet a member of the Conference on Disarmament. The Berlin wall still stood. Since then much has changed. In this very room the frescos of the Spanish painter stirred my imagination and the severe countenance of the Spanish jurist Francisco de Vitoria gazed down on us from these same walls.

It is not exclusively my condition as a Spaniard that is going to inform my statement today, however, as I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. Furthermore, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union, namely, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and also Cyprus and Malta, align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President, it is a great pleasure for me to see you in the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I am convinced that the Conference on Disarmament will benefit immensely from your long experience and diplomatic skills in the difficult situation which it faces. Let me also extend the greetings of the European Union to the Secretary-General

(Mr. Miranda, Spain)

of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, and to our Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Román-Moray. I should also like to pay tribute to the ambassadors who have left this Conference and to greet those who, like myself, have joined it in this session.

Few events have galvanized the international system into action so completely in so short a time as the horrific attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States. At a special meeting in Brussels on 21 September 2001 the Council of Europe had underscored its firm determination to act in concert in all circumstances and agreed to a coordinated and comprehensive action plan to combat terrorism, covering a wide range of measures. In accordance with that action plan, the Council decided to launch a targeted initiative to respond effectively to the international threat of terrorism, focusing on the following elements:

- Strengthening of the relevant multilateral instruments in the field of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, with a view to promoting their universalization and ensuring their effective implementation;

- Development of specific measures to strengthen export controls, to prevent terrorist groups and the States which harbour them from acquiring materials related to weapons of mass destruction;

- International cooperation, in particular protection and assistance against the use or threat of use of chemical and biological weapons, as well as measures to maintain physical control of nuclear materials worldwide;

- Stepping up of political dialogue with third countries in the field of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

Indeed, as stated by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union on 10 December 2001, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control remain an indispensable element of cooperative security between States. They can also make an essential contribution to the global fight against terrorism by reducing the risk of non-State actors gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, radioactive materials and their means of delivery as well as preventing the spread of conventional weapons.

The entire international community as a whole is now having to deal with the risks posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Our security and stability, at both global and regional levels, are being threatened by such actions. The terrorist attacks of 11 September have lent an even greater sense of urgency to the common endeavour required of all States to reach joint agreement on new instruments and mechanisms to ensure mutual security.

In this changing global security environment, however, the strengthening of international norms and political instruments to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is a main priority for the European Union and it is therefore committed to the reinforcement of the multilateral instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation.

(Mr. Miranda, Spain)

Despite certain unfortunate setbacks, such as that relating to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty or the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, 2001 was not an unredeemedly dismal year for efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation. Multilateral work was successfully conducted in other areas, such as the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, held in Managua, and the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We welcome the entry into force of the Open Skies Treaty on 1 January 2001.

The meeting in Paris on 7 and 8 February on the international code of conduct against missile proliferation was both productive and promising. The European Union intends to continue playing a dynamic role in the further unfolding of this process.

The European Union welcomes the joint statement by the President of the United States of America and the President of the Russian Federation on a new relationship between the two countries for the twenty-first century and takes note of their commitment to the biological and chemical weapons conventions, as well as to the strengthening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We stand ready to work with them and with other States in every possible way in order to attain those goals, especially during the NPT Preparatory Committee and the reconvened Review Conference of the BWC. We welcome the intention of the American and Russian Governments to conduct negotiations in the coming month to formalize an agreement on the reduction of offensive nuclear weapons that will preserve the verification and transparency procedures which exist in current agreements. We are also convinced that this new relationship, together with continuing consultations with other countries, will build momentum for compromise and commitments in this and other multilateral regimes and forums on disarmament and non-proliferation.

The European Union wishes to underscore the importance and urgency of an early entry into force of the CTBT and calls upon all States which have not as yet not done so to accede to the Treaty unconditionally and without delay, particularly those on the list of 44 States whose ratification is indispensable.

The year 2001 witnessed an upheaval in international relations on a truly global scale and yet today the Conference on Disarmament is still unable to launch its work. While paying tribute to all your predecessors in the Chair, and in particular to Ambassador Reyes for his success in reaching agreement on a non-contested issue of our agenda, the European Union can only deeply regret this situation.

The European Union stresses once again its commitment to the full implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and also the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. In the context of the Conference on Disarmament, this applies in particular to two important practical steps to which all States parties to the NPT have agreed, namely, the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the

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establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body with the mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. This undertaking should pave the way for agreement on the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work.

The Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral forum available to the international community for disarmament negotiations. In 1998 it decided to launch - and did indeed launch - negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and international, and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, in accordance with the statement of the Special Coordinator in 1995 and the mandate contained therein, which included both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. Together with the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations constitutes the next vital step in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process.

The need for such negotiations to commence at the earliest possible stage was clearly stated in the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and reaffirmed in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and also in subsequent resolutions adopted by consensus by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 and in 2001. Notwithstanding all the delays, the European Union continues to attach the utmost importance to the launching of negotiations on such a treaty during this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament and to its rapid conclusion.

The Conference on Disarmament cannot remain deaf to the legitimate expectations of the international community. We cannot ignore the fact that some items on the Conference on Disarmament agenda have been taken up in other forums. The European Union hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will rise to the challenge and reach an agreement on its programme of work and thus be in a position to address all the substantive issues contained therein.

To succeed in this endeavour, it is essential that the legitimate security concerns of all States be taken into account. Any agreement to be reached now on the commencement of our work must be based on three interconnected elements: the immediate launch of FMCT negotiations, as well as efforts to address both nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 56/23, in subsidiary bodies whose mandates must be both pragmatic and substantive in order to be universally acceptable. The European Union is convinced that such an agreement is within our grasp.

Throughout the sessions of previous years the European Union has lent its support and approval to the efforts of successive Presidents of the Conference, including Ambassadors Kreid and Lindt. Their work has been further refined over the intervening months and transformed into document CD/1624, which has come to be known as the "Amorim proposal". In the view of the European Union, this proposal contains the elements for a rapid agreement, provided all members of the Conference display a spirit of openness and pragmatism. We are also convinced that other delegations and groups of countries share this assessment of the situation, in accordance with which the President should be able to find a solution.

(Mr. Miranda, Spain)

There is no need today to recount in detail the views of the European Union on the other items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament that are included in document CD/1624. We support the beginning of work on those too and we will take up the issue again and set out our position on these items as soon as the Conference embarks on its substantive work. Nonetheless, we would like wholeheartedly to thank all the three special coordinators on procedural issues - Ambassador Seibert of Germany, Ambassador Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Draganov and Mr. Petar Kolarov of Bulgaria - for their dedication and their very valuable contribution to our work. The European Union supports the renewal at the earliest possible stage during the current annual session of the mandates of the three special coordinators and looks forward to assisting them in the efficient performance of their functions.

Allow me here to recall that the European Union is firmly committed to the continuation of the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. We particularly favour the future admission to the Conference on Disarmament of those member States of the European Union which are not yet members of the Conference. The European Union also supports the candidature of the associated countries that have expressed their wish to become members of this body.

Mr. President, the European Union wishes to reiate its commitment to multilateralism. We would like to emphasize yet again that which we all affirmed in General Assembly resolution 56/24 T, namely, that multilateralism is a core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation with a view to maintaining and strengthening universal norms and enlarging their scope. The persisting stalemate within the Conference is thus serving to weaken the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations General Assembly have urged us to agree on a programme work. The European Union pledges its strong support to you and your successors in working to restore to the Conference on Disarmament the leading role that it has been designed to play in this ever-changing world.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): I thank the Ambassador for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Mary Whelan of Ireland, who will be addressing the Conference for the first time. I should like to take this opportunity to welcome her once again and to express the hope that our cooperation with her will be fruitful and help us to realize the aims of the Conference.

Mrs. WHELAN (Ireland): Mr. President, on this, my first occasion, as you said, to address the Conference, I want to express my appreciation to you and indeed to all members of this body for the warmth of your welcome, for your advice and particularly for your encouragement. In the light of Egypt's contribution to multilateral disarmament issues and the fact that our countries work together as members of the New Agenda Coalition, it is a particular pleasure to address this meeting during your own Presidency. I admire the efforts which you have made - and have continued to make - to encourage us - the members of the Conference on Disarmament - to discharge our responsibilities and to adopt a programme of work.

(Mrs. Whelan, Ireland)

For many years before my appointment to Geneva, I followed Ireland's efforts to become a member of this body. I shared in the sense of achievement when Ireland was eventually admitted to membership and believed that it would provide the means to work with other States to carry forward our common agenda. It was with great disappointment that we found membership coincided with a period of deepening stagnation and growing frustration.

After three years the Conference is still unable to meet its obligations. In that period the world has become neither a safer nor a more secure place. A few months ago we witnessed the devastation wrought by terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. The resilience with which the Government and people of the United States responded to those attacks was testimony to the strength of their democracy and the ability of the human spirit to overcome evil. The immediate and continuing support of the international community to the fight against terrorism bears witness to the strength of our collective commitment to what is a common threat and the effectiveness of international action when allied to political will. At the same time that the events of last September highlighted our vulnerability, the response to them demonstrated the need for focused international action.

Outside this meeting room, fundamental change is taking place in our concept of what constitutes threats to international peace and security. Yet in this Conference - which we its members take pride in calling the "sole multilateral forum" for disarmament negotiations - we continue to act as if nothing has changed. In his message of 22 January 2002 to the Conference on Disarmament, the Secretary-General of the United Nations expressed the hope that the Conference would respond to the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation "with dynamism and determination". He pointed out that such a response requires "a complete break with the prolonged inactivity of the Conference". Yet we seem to make no progress. We fail to carry out the mandates given to us by other forums of which we are members.

Over the past three weeks I have listened carefully to the statements which have been made. All have been thought-provoking, most have conveyed a sense of urgency. All reaffirmed the commitment of the membership to an effective Conference on Disarmament. Some referred to preoccupations with issues of national concern. Speaking on behalf of a small country in an increasingly interdependent world, we have long since concluded that the best way to guarantee our own security is to work wholeheartedly with others to establish multilaterally agreed rules which effectively address issues of non-proliferation and disarmament.

Ireland is fully aligned to the statement which Spain made earlier on behalf of the European Union. Together with our European Union partners, we believe that part of our collective response to the 11 September events must be to reaffirm the value of multilateral measures in disarmament and arms control. There are those who question the utility of such measures, pointing to the danger of non-compliance and the tendency of international agreements to reflect the lowest common denominator. We believe that such criticisms reinforce the need for greater cooperation and should not lessen it.

The report of the Conference to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session recognized that the support for the Amorim proposal contained in document CD/1624 was a basis for further

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intensified consultations. My delegation, in common with most others in this room, believes that the Amorim proposal provides a basis not only for further consultations, but also for decision by the Conference on its work programme. Ireland believes that this proposal takes into account, to the best possible extent, the interests of all States.

Along with other delegations, we regard the provisions of CD/1624 with respect to agenda item 1 on nuclear disarmament as a compromise. We have consistently favoured the early establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament and that will remain our position. We agree that the Conference on Disarmament should also begin negotiations on a treaty dealing with fissile material. Since 1995 we have, in the Shannon mandate, a basis for negotiations on this issue. Yet some are linking the launch of negotiations on FMCT to proposals to launch negotiations in other areas. It is difficult to understand the merits of this approach. On the third major issue confronting the Conference, we see merit in embarking on a process which will eventually lead to a legal agreement for the non-weaponization of outer space.

When expressing frustration with the current inability of the Conference on Disarmament to discharge its mandate, it is customary to pay tribute to its past history. The negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was the last major achievement of this Conference. Yet the Treaty had not entered into force five years after being opened for signature.

An earlier milestone on the disarmament road was the negotiation 30 years ago of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. In the aftermath of the tragedy of last September we might have expected that the States parties would approach the Fifth Review Conference with a strong sense of common purpose to strengthen its provisions and put in place a verification system. But the Review Conference could not conclude its work and will resume again later this year. With our European Union partners, we believe that it is important to continue working for the strengthening of the application of the Convention in all its aspects. The problem lies not only with our present failure to move forward but also with our inability to build on earlier achievements.

In an otherwise disappointing scene in Geneva it is well to acknowledge the positive outcome of the work of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The extension of the scope of the Convention and its existing protocols is an important development. The agreement to convoke a group of governmental experts on explosive remnants of war, with a broad mandate that includes the possibility of negotiating a legally binding instrument, will allow States Parties to respond to the humanitarian concerns that have been expressed on this issue.

If we all, as we constantly affirm, regard disarmament and arms control as issues of great importance, we have to show greater ambition in our future endeavours and a greater willingness to meet the commitments which we freely entered into in the past. In this context Ireland attaches the utmost importance to the full implementation of the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapons States to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals must be accomplished, along with the other 12 steps

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towards that goal. Ireland, in cooperation with our partners in the New Agenda Coalition and with all States Parties, will actively pursue this blueprint, beginning with the meeting next April of the Preparatory Committee. Some of the commitments entered into in 2000 relate to the programme of work of this body. If we believe in the value of this Conference we need to demonstrate it not in our words but in our decisions.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): Thank you for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

While that concludes my list of speakers for today, I see that the Ambassador of Pakistan has asked for the floor.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, it was not my intention to seek the floor this morning but, having heard the statement of my distinguished colleague from France, Ambassador de La Fortelle, I would just like to make one or two brief observations.

We deeply appreciate the decision of the French delegation to convey a report on the Paris meeting which considered the draft international code of conduct against missile proliferation. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Government of France for its invitation to my country to attend this meeting in Paris earlier this month. The Conference on Disarmament, Mr. President, is certainly the most appropriate forum for a comprehensive consideration of the issue of missiles.

While appreciating the initiative taken by France and the European Union, my delegation will avail itself of an early opportunity to outline Pakistan's views on the issue of missiles and why we believe that this subject is a most appropriate subject to be addressed within the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): Does any other delegation wish to speak at this stage? I give the floor to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. SOLTANIEH (Islamic Republic of Iran): Since this is my first statement, I would like to express my appreciation of your presidency and admiration for the way in which you have presided over this meeting. I wish you the very best success and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

Having listened with interest to the statement by the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan pursuant to the discussions that we held earlier, we believe that there are some merits in the suggestion. May I draw to your kind attention and to that of my distinguished colleague the resolutions that my delegation has proposed in the United Nations General Assembly, namely, resolutions 54/54 F and 55/33 A, of December 1999 and November 2000 respectively, on missiles and the need for a comprehensive, balanced and non-discriminatory approach to the issue and, having considered the mandate and the responsibility of the Conference on Disarmament, we consider that this issue should appropriately be dealt with in this Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): Thank you for your statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I do not see any.

Distinguished delegates, as I announced earlier, I shall now suspend this plenary meeting, and, in 10 minutes' time, I will convene an informal meeting to consider the draft decision on the appointment of three special coordinators. This meeting will be open to members of the Conference and observer States only.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): The 892nd plenary meeting is resumed. Distinguished delegates, I should now like to formalize the agreement reached earlier at the informal plenary meeting and, therefore, I invite the Conference to take action on the draft decision on the appointment of special coordinators on the review of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, on expansion of its membership and on its improved and effective functioning, which is before you in document CD/WP.525, after having incorporated the following amendment, which I shall read in English, since that is the language of the original text.

The second paragraph of CD/WP.525 would begin as follows: "In accordance with CD/1653 (para. 41)", and it would continue as in the original text, with "decides to appoint Special Coordinators".

May I take it that the Conference wishes to adopt the draft decision contained in CD/WP.525, as amended orally.

It is so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): This decision will be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, I should like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your cooperation and the spirit of accommodation that was displayed in our joint efforts over the last few weeks, which have allowed us to adopt the decision on the appointment of three special coordinators. I sincerely hope that this decision will give a new impetus to our further efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work.

Our next immediate task will be to reach consensus on candidates to fill the posts of special coordinators as soon as possible. I would like to take this opportunity to wish our new President, Ambassador Fisseha Yimer Aboye of Ethiopia, every success in this endeavour and to assure him of our full cooperation in discharging his duties.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor?

(The President)

If there are no more requests for the floor, since my term of office is drawing to a close, I should like to make some concluding remarks.

Distinguished Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen.

Allow me, at the end of this last plenary under the Egyptian presidency, to review the most important outcomes of the consultations which I have held since my country assumed the presidency of the Conference and to give you some general impressions about the current status of the Conference and the prospects for the discussions to be held under its auspices.

First, the international situation as regards disarmament at the beginning of 2002 is very different from the situation that obtained in the latter part of 2001. Events have taken place which have a direct bearing on many of the most important international and bilateral disarmament treaties, and which many considered to be other than positive. Furthermore, changes in concepts and military technology and uncertainty about the future trends in weapons systems and strategic thinking have raised many questions and, occasionally, concerns. The world saw an unprecedented degree of international cooperation in efforts to combat the problem of terrorism following the events of 11 September last year. This helped to raise awareness of the importance of multilateral, collective action in strengthening the international system for disarmament and arms control and overcoming the paralysis which has afflicted the Conference on Disarmament for many years.

Second, the dynamics of the present international strategic situation, whether they can be characterized as positive or negative, contrast sharply with the paralysis from which this Conference suffers. To me, this contradiction seems worrying. It also heightens our sense of the collective responsibility that we all share. While I cannot state that the Conference is in a position to adopt its programme of work and start its substantive work at this time, I can nevertheless say that I sensed a distinct feeling of responsibility and utmost determination to preserve the credibility of the Conference, so that it may discharge its functions in the best possible way, as soon as the international circumstances allow.

Third, I have tried to hold broad-based consultations characterized by complete transparency, in accordance with our rules of procedure and decision 1036 on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference and in a spirit of complete openness. On 24 January 2002, I held informal consultations affording all delegations the opportunity to state their positions and views on the Conference's work. This is in addition to the statements that we have heard during the plenaries. I have also endeavoured to meet with the regional groups separately and should like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all those that shared their views with me on this subject.

Although we did not manage to reach agreement on the programme of work during the consultations, no delegation expressed a view that differs radically from the general position. In other words, the proposal put forward by Ambassador Amorim in document CD/1624 is still regarded as a basis for further intensive consultations, taking account of the views and proposals already presented in this regard. I should also like to stress the importance of the collective

(The President)

efforts made by the successive Presidents of the Conference, which are encapsulated in the Amorim proposal. The Egyptian presidency had no wish to submit any further proposals on the programme of work that might not have enjoyed the broad support of all members of the Conference. If all members of the Conference have a collective responsibility for reaching agreement on a programme of work, active States members, particularly nuclear States, have a special responsibility for doing so.

Fourth, several delegations presented well-considered and innovative ideas designed to benefit from the technical expertise available in the Conference. Unfortunately, the circumstances of the Conference were not conducive to reaching consensus on any of those ideas.

I should like to express my gratitude to the members of the Conference for the willingness displayed since the beginning of this year's session to make the best possible use of plenary meetings, and, in particular, for the important statements we have heard over the past weeks focusing on the key issues in international disarmament and arms control, including the current situation of the Conference on Disarmament. We were also pleased that all delegations reaffirmed their commitment to the multilateral approach to disarmament and their determination to preserve the Conference's credibility.

Fifth, without wishing to detract from the importance of the decision adopted by the Conference today to appoint three special coordinators on the review of the Conference's agenda, the expansion of its membership and its improved and effective functioning, this measure cannot be taken as an alternative to the substantive work of the Conference. It was adopted in response to the recommendation made by the Conference in the annual report adopted last year, and is a sign of the Conference's institutional vitality. Any measure that the Conference takes in order to revitalize its work should be viewed as a step forward, particularly in the current circumstances. This equally applies to the success of the Conference in adopting an agenda at the beginning of the session.

I hope that the appointment of the special coordinators at the beginning of this year's session will give them enough time to hold broad-based consultations producing tangible results that are acceptable to all members of the Conference. I repeat that while this decision can under no circumstances be a substitute for our substantive work, I am confident that the progress made on procedural matters will have a positive effect on the Conference's work when we take up our substantive work.

I should like to express my deep appreciation to my predecessor, Ambassador Camilo Reyes, who helped us reach agreement on the programme of work and enabled last year's Conference to adopt the decision on the appointment of the special coordinators. I also wish to thank the three special coordinators who were appointed by the Conference last year namely, Ambassador Seibert of Germany, Ambassador Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria, for their efforts in discharging their functions. I do, of course, wish every success to those who will assume those functions.

(The President)

The international system for multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation is going through a delicate phase, on account of fundamental changes in the international security climate. In spite of these changes, the aspirations of many States, including Egypt, remain unaltered. These States rely on this system as a security option and strategic choice designed to achieve international peace and security by establishing international rules that are applicable to all without distinction. The aspirations of the peoples of the world remain the same. They wish to see effective measures taken in all areas of disarmament so that weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, will be eliminated, for the danger of nuclear annihilation continues to threaten the human race.

The Conference on Disarmament cannot ignore these hopes and aspirations nor can it ignore the plea from civil society to allow it to make its voice heard at the Conference. I hope that the special coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference will be successful in allowing non-governmental organizations to participate in the Conference's work.

The real concern that I have sensed among many delegations over the abiding paralysis in the Conference's work is counterbalanced by an equal measure of concern on the part of all delegations to preserve the credibility of the Conference as the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations.

Finally, I should like to express my appreciation to all delegations and colleagues for their cooperation and for the kind wishes which they have expressed towards my country and myself. I should also like to thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, the Under-Secretary-General, for their indispensable advice and help. I should like to thank the entire staff of the secretariat for the efficient and effective support that it has provided to this presidency in particular and the Conference in general. I should also like to thank the translation staff that has worked hard to serve the Conference. From a personal point of view, it has been a great honour to act as the President of the Conference and it is something of which I shall be especially proud in my career, because it has allowed me to work side-by-side with outstanding people both at the diplomatic and human levels. This shows that, in spite of its current difficulties, the Conference remains, as many in the diplomatic community have said, "the best club in town". It only remains for me to wish my successor in this post, Ambassador Fisseha Yimer Aboye of Ethiopia, every success during his term of office. My delegation stands ready to offer him any support that he may need.

This concludes our business for today.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 21 February 2002 in this room.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.